

AVP for Hire: One Perspective

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I believe the restrictions around compensation are exclusionary and allow only privileged people to facilitate. I believe this is a large factor in why AVP is so white, so old, and so overly educated and financially middle/upper class.

I understand the philosophy of exempting prison work from compensation. I think it is misguided however and comes from a place of tremendous privilege. We have NVC in several of our prisons - their facilitators and instructors are paid. Because of this they are able to grow and find more facilitators than we can. AVP prison programs nearly uniformly struggle to keep going. (We're down about 35 prisons from several years ago.) I've done compensated work and it does not diminish the receipt of the message, the appreciation for the program or the facilitators, nor undermine the commitment of the facilitators.

We have had a bunch of privileged white people who base their self-worth on the fact they volunteer for this work. There's nothing wrong with that. But they have created policies that seem based on their notions of "purity" that deny the opportunity to many.

As to the stipend issue - for many the notion of stipend is a small, nominal payment. Some see it as just covering travel, food, sometimes rooms. A few see it as income replacement.

I believe facilitators should be able to be paid, and I would prefer them to receive a livable, professional wage for the work. I believe facilitators should be able to make \$20, \$30 or more per hour. I would love to be paying people \$1000 per workshop.

I think this could give livable jobs to returning citizens. I believe it could allow us to recruit more high school and college students. It will allow people who can't afford to take time off from jobs to get incentives for facilitating.

(I've also been working with schools, the Y and other organizations that think if we are not charging for it, it can't be worth much. Much of our society reflects value with cost. I've actually lost out to far less effective but expensive programs because of this mind set.

I have several potential facilitators who've lost kids to gang violence. They are passionate and driven - and they can't facilitate because they're single mom's working to support their families. I'd like to be able to pay them more than they earn at their current job so they can take time off - or even shift over completely.

I believe deleting these restrictions from the policy will leave locals free to pay (or volunteer) as they see best. I paid one privileged facilitator who deferred her compensation to a donation to another AVP group. If you choose not to be paid - I prefer that type of solution.

That's my world view and proposal on the issue. I believe it became the majority view in the organization several years ago. But it will take some serious work and discussion to move forward with.

Money does complicate things. And it does and will have impacts of how we do the work and we will need to protect who we are from some of the effects. (As one example - when an organization pays for a workshop they expect a level of professionalism that creates a pressure not to include less polished facilitators. we have to resist these sorts of pressures and figure out how to deal with them.) But I believe we can do that.
